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# NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW.

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ART. I.—1. *The Novels and Miscellaneous Works of DANIEL DE FOE.* Oxford: Printed by D. A. Talboys for Thomas Tegg. London. 1848.

2. *DE FOE'S Works.* Vol. I. New York: Redfield.

FEW of the crowd that throng the old avenues of Cripplegate, at the present day, revert to the prophet and thinker born and bred there, whose romance has been the household story of two great nations, and has been domesticated, as a model narrative, in every country of Europe for more than a century. Yet there is no name which should be more gratefully honored by a London citizen than that of Daniel De Foe. His genius and efficiency vindicate the claims even of "a nation of shopkeepers," and turn that satire into eulogy. His book has survived the more finished writings of the courtly authors who ridiculed him. In literature and politics he was essentially a representative man; in life he stood in the front rank of the people, and their universal recognition has long since crowned his memory with enduring fame.

In the great national problem worked out and permanently solved by the course of events and the war of opinion, between the birth of Puritanism in England and the realization of constitutional liberty under William of Orange, many illustrious names appear identified with the progress of civil

and religious freedom. In the field, the council, the church, the courts, in society and in literature, these noble advocates taught, struggled, endured, and often died, in behalf of truths and privileges sacred to humanity. Among those who promoted the great end in the noblest way, — that is, by appeals to reason, and by assiduous endeavors to enlighten the masses, — no one deserves higher credit than Daniel De Foe. And yet, by one of those caprices of fame, which so often astonish us in the history of gifted men, this voluminous writer and stanch advocate of human freedom and a progressive civic life, is chiefly, and, so far as the many are concerned, exclusively, known as the author of the most popular story in the English language. The fierce polemical works upon which the vigor of his years was expended, the strange vicissitudes, the public services, and the private virtues of the man De Foe, have been lost sight of in the renown of the author of *Robinson Crusoe*. Indeed, that familiar book, in the popular imagination, is rather esteemed as a lucky hit of inventive genius, than as the flowering of a mind rendered earnest and fruitful through a life of anxious mental toil and relentless persecution. To one thoroughly acquainted with De Foe's career, and aware of his fortunes and achievements, the remarkable fiction which embalms his memory has a new and pathetic significance. It was his first attempt to enlist his extraordinary powers in a work of pure literary art. To write it, he stood aloof from the party strife in which, for thirty years, his thoughts had been engaged. Like a brave soldier who had returned home from a long but successful campaign, with victory achieved, yet no spoils acquired, he seems to have laid aside the armor of political and religious warfare, cheered only by a sense of duty bravely performed, and then in the autumn of life, the lull of the storm, the pensive twilight of honest age, yielded himself to a work prompted by his own idiosyncrasies, unmarred by faction, and thoroughly adapted to the popular heart. The intrinsic charm of the narrative, therefore, is infinitely expanded when thus viewed with reference to De Foe's circumstances and aims.

Could the life of this extraordinary man be represented in a dramatic form, we should behold him in the utmost ex-

tremes of social position, each explicable by his course as an author. He might be seen the familiar and admired *habitué* of a Puritan coffee-house, ardently discussing the latest news from the seat of war, or the local question of the hour; alternating between his hosier's shop in Cornhill and the Dissenters' chapel at Surrey; in arms for the Duke of Monmouth; one of the handsomely mounted escort of volunteers who attended William and Mary from Whitehall to the Mansion-House; a bankrupt refugee, talking with Selkirk at the Red Lion Tavern in Bristol; the confidential visitor ensconced in the cabinet of William of Orange; the occupant of a cell in Newgate; an honored guest at Edinburgh, promoting the Union; a secret ambassador to the Continent; the delegate of the people, handing to Harley a mammoth petition; the cynosure of a hundred sympathetic and respectful eyes as he stands in the pillory; in comfortable retirement at Newington; and at last a victim of filial ingratitude, his health wasted in noble intellectual toil, dying at the age of seventy. Such are a few of the strong contrasts which the mere external drama of De Foe's life presents.

To appreciate his course we must vividly recall the events of his time and the spirit of his age. As if ordained by Providence for a legitimate representative of the English mind, he derived his descent from the better class of yeomen; his birthplace was the heart of London; and his home was chiefly there at a period when its citizenship was a high distinction and privilege, when municipal glory had not faded before the splendor of fashion, now dominant in a region which, in De Foe's time, was suburban, and when locomotive facilities had not almost identified town and country. One of the people by birth and association, he became more intimately related to them through his public spirit, his political ideas, and his religious sentiments. These were all essentially democratic. The wants of the ignorant many, the thirst for social reform, the popular basis of the constitution, and the right of free judgment and action in religion, appear to have been original instincts rather than mere opinions in the mind of De Foe. They were confirmed by the family discipline, the Non-conformist rites, the simple habits, and the manly self-

reliance incident to the household of a Dissenting London trader of that day.

Although so obviously endowed for the vocation of an author, De Foe began life as a tradesman. Cut off by his religious associations from any share in a university education, he studied the higher academic branches with a preceptor of his own faith, of acknowledged scholarship; and at first designed to adopt the clerical profession. In his commercial speculations he was unsuccessful, as might have been anticipated; for his mind was too speculative to engage prosperously in business, for which, however, he was not deficient in talent, as his appointment as secretary, first to a glass, and then to a brick manufacturing company, sufficiently proves. His friends also arranged a mercantile enterprise for him at Cadiz; but he yielded to a strong innate conviction that his appropriate sphere was England, and his first duty that of a writer. Trade, however, while it proved unfortunate as a pursuit, elicited character, and yielded valuable lessons. He, with rare integrity, paid the balance of his debts, when subsequently enriched, although legally acquitted by a compromise; and his knowledge of the wants, usages, and condition of the "English Tradesman" enabled him to write the useful and suggestive treatise which bears that title. It gave him also a fund of experience; and we trace in his books a familiarity with human nature and London life, that could in few other ways have been so authentically gained. While Swift was noting the banquets he attended for the diversion of Stella, Steele dodging bailiffs in his luxurious establishment, Addison, in elegant trim, paying his court to the Countess of Warwick, and Bolingbroke embodying his heartless philosophy in artificial rhetoric, De Foe was wrestling for truth in Cripple-gate. A man of the people, a writer of plain, vigorous, unembellished English, there he stood, manfully claiming the right of private judgment; battling to the death against the prejudices which interfered with a liberal government; explaining, with intelligent emphasis, the popular basis of the constitution; initiating that philosophy of trade, of social economy, of charitable institutions, and of literature, then a bold and radical innovation, now, in its varied forms, recognized

as the evidence of human progress and the pledge of a glorious future. Taste, wit, and refined sensualism were the dominant traits of the acknowledged men of genius in society around him; privation, slander, imprisonment, and ridicule were the reward of his manly self-consecration. His contemporary authors are known to us through elaborate and loving memoirs; their portraits adorn noble galleries; scholars still emulate their works, and glorify them in reviews; while their monumental effigies are clustered in imposing beauty in the venerable Abbey. Our knowledge of De Foe's appearance is chiefly derived from an advertisement describing him as a fugitive; his birth and name have been subjects of dispute; of his domestic correspondence, we have only a letter describing the unfilial improvidence of his son; it is impossible to identify all his works; he is mentioned by the writers of his day only in the bitter terms of party hatred; and his mortal remains are blended with the martyred dust of Bunhill Fields.

The political writings of De Foe emphatically define his career as an English citizen; and although many of them have lost their chief interest from the temporary nature of the subjects discussed, yet they are all impressive landmarks to indicate the consistent, fearless, and rational spirit, the indomitable industry and loyalty of purpose, which distinguished his life. With every successive phase of history, every important act of the government, or significant demonstration by the people, an essay, a satire, or an appeal, from his ready and earnest pen, gives token of vigilance and enthusiasm. His pamphlets, like alert guerilla parties, keep up a running and sometimes isolated, yet none the less effective fire, along the line of political combatants. Always ranged on the side of popular right and religious liberty, his pleas, by their simplicity and good sense, invariably won the attention of the masses, and irritated the Tory faction. Usually published anonymously, and often under the disguise of irony or quaint allegory, they betrayed a cleverness which even the fashionable wits could not deny. Thus, by seasonable invective and keen satire, De Foe scattered the elements of great political truths among the heated minds of his fellow-

countrymen, anticipated the progress of popular enlightenment, and furnished the ignorant and the oppressed with arguments that sanctioned their endeavors.

It was opposition to the plans of James in regard to the succession, and not affinity with the character of Monmouth, that enlisted him in the romantic and vain enterprise of the latter. To Queen Anne's natural goodness of heart and Harley's secret political bias he owed his enfranchisement. His ironical tirade against the Hanoverian cause was so utterly misunderstood, that, for a while, he suffered persecution as its enemy. But his relation to William of Orange was intimate and genuine. The character of that monarch was akin to his own. There was between them a sympathy of mind; courage, liberal views, and moral energy were alike the characteristics of the author and the king. De Foe effectively advanced the measures of his royal patron, and was devoted to his cause and his memory.

If we examine critically his miscellaneous writings, and refer to the dates of important civil and social reforms, his direct agency in their achievement will impressively appear. With the foresight attained only by a lover of truth, he anticipated the great improvements of the last and the present century, and often gave the first hint of their necessity, or the primal argument for their adoption. The superior brilliancy of later writers has kept his precedence out of view. Yet there is scarcely a remarkable social or literary phenomenon resulting from the progress of ideas, which we cannot trace directly or indirectly to De Foe. He was a pioneer in the great cause of human advancement, and his name should be identified with many of the popular topics and enterprises of our own day. The universal political theme of this moment is what is called "the Eastern Question." The first pamphlet of De Foe, written before the age of manhood, was devoted to a kindred subject, in which he argued that it was "better that the Popish house of Austria should ruin the Protestants in Hungary, than that the infidel house of Ottoman should ruin both Protestants and Papists." The reality of spiritual communications is now a fertile text for tongue and press. De Foe's essay on "Apparitions" may not only be read with

advantage by the credulous and the sceptical, but is a striking evidence of the identity of feeling on that subject then and now. "Between our ancestors' laying too much stress upon them," he says, "and the present age endeavoring wholly to explode and despise them, the world seems hardly ever to have come to a right understanding." And again: "Spirit is certainly something we do not fully understand, in our present confined circumstances; and, as we do not fully understand the thing, so neither can we distinguish its operation. Yet, notwithstanding all this, it converses here, is with us and among us, corresponds, though unembodied, with our spirits, and this conversing is not only by an invisible, but to us an inconceivable way," etc. To these speculations he brought no ordinary learning and philosophy, and while he recognizes the spiritual element in life, he considers it with logic, with good sense, and in the light of truth. Constitutional freedom has been the favorite idea of English and American statesmen; but De Foe's treatise on the "Original Power of the Collective Body of the People of England" was one of the first and most daring popular expositions of a doctrine that lies at the foundation of all free governments. Political economy is generally considered a new science; De Foe's commercial writings, his tract entitled "Giving Alms no Charity," and the financial suggestions thrown out in his "Essay on Projects," anticipate many of the axioms of later philosophers in this department. It is to the papers in the *Spectator* that the first appreciation of Milton's poetry is ascribed; yet seven years before Addison designated the sublimities of *Paradise Lost*, De Foe set forth its author's transcendent claims. The institution of marriage has been freely examined in our day; De Foe, in his bold reproach of its abuse and his eloquent exposition of its religious character, was in advance of his times. He was the first effectually to set forth the public duty of instituting asylums for the insane and the idiotic, of establishing commissioners of bankruptcy, and pensions for the indigent. Sydney Smith's humorous appeal is thought by many the earliest popular argument for a higher grade of female culture; but at a time when the chivalric element was all but extinguished, and women were treated



either as toys, slaves, or idols, De Foe became an eloquent and able advocate for the education of women. "A woman of sense and manners," he wrote, "is the finest and most delicate part of God's creation; and it is the sordidest piece of folly and ingratitude to withhold from the sex the lustre which the advantage of education gives to the natural beauty of their minds." One of the most successful of modern *ruses* is the famous "Moon Hoax"; De Foe in a political satire developed lunar language, and narrated incidents of lunar adventure. He recommended the establishment of a society for "encouraging polite learning and improving the English language," prior to Swift's celebrated letter to Lord Oxford. The most interesting fact, however, of his influence as a thinker, at least to our American sympathies, is, that it was the perusal of De Foe that aroused the dormant sentiments and quickened the mental enterprise of Franklin. "I found, besides," he says in his Autobiography, "a work of De Foe's, entitled an 'Essay on Projects,' from which, perhaps, I derived impressions that have since influenced some of the principal events of my life." His zest for new truth, and his recognition of liberal principles were thus confirmed and enlarged, in early youth, by the author of Robinson Crusoe. De Foe anticipated the colonial revolt and the triumph of freedom in America. He was the predecessor of Rousseau as a social reformer. He ably vindicated the right of authors to a permanent share in the income of their works. His geographical speculations were confirmed by the subsequent discoveries of Denham and Lander. He was the father of periodical literature; for his "Review," first planned in Newgate, was the harbinger of those popular miscellanies that delighted and improved the readers of Queen Anne's day. Nor is this the world's only obligation to him in literature. His unprecedented and instantly successful fiction originated the English novel, and the celebrated authors who have since enchanted us and made themselves renowned in this field, all trace back the spells they evoke to Daniel De Foe.

It is a singular coincidence, that the most classical poet and the most successful romancer of that period, in England, were the sons of butchers. Akenside, born ten years before De

Foe's death, carried to his grave a memorial of the paternal vocation, in regard to which he was morbidly sensitive, in the form of a wound that caused him always to limp, received from one of his father's cleavers, which was accidentally dropped on the embryo poet's foot. Gifford made cruel use of the plebeian occupation of the elder Keats, in his attempt to mortify the sensitive author of *Hyperion*. De Foe, if we may judge by the spirit of his writings and the tenor of his life, cheerfully accepted the rank in which his lot was cast. He knew the true dignity of human nature, and understood that all genuine power and fame originate with, or must be sanctioned by, popular sentiment. It was an axiom of his to defy the critics, if he could but have the people with him. It may seem to involve no great heroism or perspicacity so to think and act; but we must remember that De Foe thus reasoned at a time when the *London Gazette*, with its meagre semiweekly announcement of court news, constituted journalism; when Baxter's voice was hushed in prison; and when our brave author himself had barely escaped the fangs of Jeffreys, to endure the long torture of inveterate proscription.

With the virtues De Foe combined the prejudices of the Non-conformists. He expresses an unreasonable contempt for May-poles and the theatre; but we must not forget that it was against the profligate levity ushered in by the Restoration, of which these and similar pastimes were emblems, rather than against amusement as such, that his indignation was levelled. De Foe and his colleagues deeply felt their responsibility to the noble cause in which they were engaged. A battle was to be waged, a great national reform wrought; politics and religion, freedom and civil progress, were to them, in a great measure, identical; the social exigencies of the times impressed them too keenly to admit of convivial enjoyment. In a word, they were in earnest, and such is not the mood in which mere pleasure-seeking can be tolerated. Yet De Foe wonderfully preserved his candor and self-respect in the heat of controversy; and boasts with reason, that, while engaged in satirizing his opponents, he never used their personal misfortunes or infirmities to make "the galled jade wince." He early acquired the lessons of self-discipline, and

bore himself with prowess, but in a calm and self-reliant manner. "In the school of affliction," he says, "I have learned more than at the academy, and more divinity than from the pulpit."

De Foe's career as an author was quite as remarkable for its versatility as for its extent. Besides the hundred and thirty-three political works identified as his, during the reigns of Anne and George, we have numerous speculative and narrative writings, and, finally, his series of fictions. He turned his pen to any subject, and cast his thoughts into any form which circumstances made desirable, with an extraordinary facility. Now we find him recording the casualties of a remarkable storm, now hard at work upon a "Seasonable Caution"; one day engaged on a versified eulogy of Scotland, (while on a visit there,) published under the title of "Caledonia," and another, deep in a "History of the Union," which he had been an effective agent in promoting. To-day it is a commercial essay; to-morrow, a book of travels. He prepares an impressive story of Mrs. Veal's ghost, which, attached to a heavy book on "Death," gives it life at once. He is no sooner out of the pillory, than he indites a philosophical hymn to the infamous machine. Shut up in Newgate, he starts a journal on a new and better plan than any before known. He welcomes Marlborough home with stanzas to Victory; and when the war is over, chants the glory of Peace. Opposed to the existing school of speculation, he groups in ironical verse the poets, sceptics, and metaphysicians of his day. He translates Du Fresnoy's Art of Painting; and tilts, in pungent rhymes, against the divine right of kings. As might have been anticipated, such rapid and varied composition admitted of no finish or revision. De Foe's cleverness and industry are more remarkable than his taste and care. His object usually was to produce an immediate impression on the world of opinion, or to supply his own wants by his pen-craft. Hence the temporary interest and merely incidental value of many of his writings. No small part of them, however, are not only of practical use, but of historical importance. De Foe has been declared by a good critic Locke's equal in reasoning. Of his "Essay on Projects" it has been said, that it is more rich in thought than any book since Ba-

con, and that it embodies the French Revolution without its follies. His great mental quality was vigorous sense. He was deficient in the love of the beautiful, and seems to have had an inadequate perception of art. He was not poetical by nature. His metrical essays owe their effect wholly to the epigrammatic hits and the sound argument they contain; the melodious versification of his contemporaries never taught him rhythm; not only are his verses destitute of refined sentiment, but they are singularly harsh and unmusical. He belongs to the same school of rhymers with Butler, Swift, and Crabbe; not imagination and grace, but graphic touches and wit redeem his lines. As a literary artist his merit lies almost exclusively in prose narrative. Here he exhibited all the individuality of his genius, and achieved his permanent renown. The secret of his effective style of narration lies in simple force of diction, homely and expressive words, and an elaborate and precise statement of details. Together, these traits form a whole that affects the mind with all the distinctness of reality. Dr. Johnson thought that the "Adventures of Captain Singleton," De Foe's second work of fiction, was a record of facts; Lord Chatham quoted his "Memoirs of a Cavalier" as a genuine piece of biography; and Dr. Wood, the account of the Plague in London as the result of personal observation; while the credence that the mass of readers bestowed upon the story of Mrs. Veal's apparition is evident from the large sale it at once secured for Drelincourt's unpopular essay.

It is curious to trace the progress of the modern novel from Ionia to Italy, and thence to England, its rudimental and imaginative style in the East, its pedantic and sentimental development in Arcadian romances, and its simple, direct, matter-of-fact and human interest as exhibited by De Foe, destined to be rendered more and more complex and artistic with the increased refinements and divisions of society, as painted by Bulwer and Thackeray. The element of probability, the artistic use of natural incidents in their legitimate order and specialties, so admirably illustrated by De Foe, is, however, as indispensable to the successful novelist to-day as when Robinson Crusoe appeared. We can easily perceive its rec-

ognition by the masters of romance. It is obvious in the minute local and personal descriptions of Scott, in Godwin's details of consciousness, and even in the grotesque pictures of still-life by Dickens. Verisimilitude is the great merit of De Foe as a novelist. The seeming authenticity of his stories is also greatly enhanced by the autobiographic form in which they are cast. He is a model narrator; passages of his fictions read like the testimony elicited in a court of justice; and incidental and apparently trifling circumstances are so naturally interwoven, as to give a singular air of truth to the whole. Now the plots of the novelist are more intricate, his characters more finely shaded and elaborately wrought, and his style of composition raised to a much higher standard. Yet the profound actuality and stern truth of De Foe give him a tenacious hold on the common sympathy; he excites deeper faith and inherits household fame. He had been a close student of human life and human nature, in their most inartificial and significant phases. Born of a sect that disdained the trappings and acknowledged the spiritual meaning of existence, he was wedded to reality from his cradle. His conflict with fortune was hand to hand and unintermitted. He used to seek communion with soldiers, sailors, and other adventurous offsprings of his own transition era. He was well acquainted with Dampier, the navigator; he saw much of foreign countries, took counsel with kings, studied economics in the experience of trade, authorship, and office, witnessed the most remarkable political vicissitudes, explored the mysteries of crime while an inmate of the Old Bailey, knew intimately the care and the solace of domestic ties, the viper sting of filial ingratitude, and the inexpressible worth of woman; he was ever a worker, and no butterfly, — always observing, reflecting, noting facts, musing on the past, scanning the future, and keenly watching the present. Thus disciplined and enriched, De Foe's mind was tempered in the furnace of affliction, and hence it is that he writes of men and things with such truthful power and practical sense. As a child, he listened to incidents of the civil war from survivors; as a youth, he fraternized with the returned soldiers of Marlborough, and the maritime heroes who explored unknown seas. The coffee-

house, the docks, the shop, the palace, the jail, the fireside, the strife of party, and the sanctions of a proscribed religion, inspired and moulded his Anglo-Saxon intelligence, his lion spirit, and humane sentiments, and enabled him to invent from experience with unequalled tact and an enduring charm.

There is no contrast in English literature more entire than that between De Foe and the fashionable writers of his day. They indeed ushered in a more graceful epoch, and are identified with the amenities of literary and social life; but their humor, tact, skill, and beauty, and even the reform in manners and in taste they achieved, languish before the robust and practical truths advanced by De Foe. His writings, though comparatively neglected at present, from the actual triumph of the ideas they embody, were distinguished then by a quality in which his more brilliant contemporaries were sadly deficient,—earnestness; his object was moral, theirs artistic; he sought to modify opinion and build up institutions, they to refine style and gratify taste; their sphere was sentiment, his, action; they strove with art to refine, he with argument to invigorate and make self-reliant the elements of national life and individual character; he dealt conscientiously with principles, they daintily with forms.

When De Foe abandoned controversy for fiction, he had already achieved a long career of authorship, and had suffered enough to damp the energy of a less vigorous mind. But he entered this new and promising field with characteristic spirit and industry. Encouraged by the extraordinary success of “Robinson Crusoe,” he published a series of tales similar in design, though much inferior in novelty and effect. It is to be regretted that the majority of these narratives are devoted to low life, and as De Foe’s *forte* was adventure, and not characterization, the coarseness of some of his graphic histories is only redeemed by the matter-of-fact, self-possessed, and authentic style with which he “forges the handwriting of Nature.” No writer ever drew more clearly the lines that divide vice from virtue. There is nothing insidious in his pictures of human frailty. “Roxana,” “Colonel Jack,” “Moll Flanders,” and other narratives of unprincipled vagabondage, while they repel the discriminating reader of the present day,

are yet historically worthy of attention, as being the genuine precursors of the modern English novel. To ignore the early specimens of any class of writings, would be as unjust to literature historically regarded, as for the painter, in his admiration of Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael, to forget Giotto and Perugino. "Captain Carleton" and "Memoirs of a Cavalier" are the germs of the historical romance of our day; even as the "Essay on Projects" may be regarded as the rough chart whence modern philanthropy and social science have derived much of their original impulse. Yet De Foe, with the usual perversity of authors, seems to have valued his metrical treatise, called *Jure Divino*, now quite neglected, above his influential pamphlets and his unrivalled story. He wrote in the spirit of Franklin and Cobbett; his very lack of ideality, his self-reliance, and his practical mind fitted him to become an exemplar in that literature which deals with common things and the universal heart. When Kean returned from his great experiment at Drury Lane, his anxious wife inquired what Lord Essex thought of the performance. The answer of the triumphant actor was, "The pit rose to me." It was this popular recognition that De Foe sought and won; and of this the permanent fame of Robinson Crusoe is the best illustration.

No charge of plagiarism was ever more irrational, than that which his enemies strove to affix to the author of this world-wide favorite. That the narrative was founded on reality appears from the well-known fact, that Selkirk's Adventures were published in 1712, seven years before Robinson Crusoe. This work and the paper by Steele on the subject, when compared with the story of De Foe, will be found to bear a relation to it as inadequate to explain the conception, as one of the Italian tales, upon the dramatized version of which Shakespeare founded his immortal plays, to those priceless dramas. Selkirk was cast on a desert island, kindled a fire by rubbing bits of wood together, diverted himself by dancing with the goats he tamed, made a bed of their skins, built two huts, wrought a needle out of a nail and a knife-blade from a piece of iron hoop, fell from a precipice, and learned to run swiftly and to hunt animals. Such were

the material hints thus furnished. In regard to the metaphysical, Steele remarks of Selkirk, that "it was a matter of great curiosity to hear him give an account of the different revolutions of his own mind in that long solitude." With our knowledge of De Foe's antecedents, of his narrative powers, and his graphic, plain, and lucid diction, it is easy to imagine how such meagre suggestions would become expanded under his pen into an elaborate, detailed, and consistent story, alive with the truths of nature and consciousness. His habit of composition, his facility in the use of the vernacular tongue, his long political warfare, which deepened thought and quickened perception, his social isolation, and his very deficiency in scholarship and ideality, were but so many preparatives. The alternation of the seasons, the notches on the calendar-post, the visions of fever, the explorations, the domestic economy of bower and cave, inventions suggested by necessity, periods of religious self-communion, and keeping a journal of reflections, are the facts which, given out in Flemish detail, and in a style of familiar and homely directness, make up Robinson Crusoe's twenty-eight years of solitude. It has been remarked that the only essentially poetical scene is the discovery of the footprint. The original of Friday, was, according to D'Israeli, a Mosquito Indian described by Dampier. What a striking proof of the universal charm of truth to nature is indicated by the popularity of such a work! Minds as diverse and as highly endowed as those of Rousseau, Dr. Johnson, Lamb, Scott, and our own Webster, acknowledged for it a life-long partiality. Cervantes and Bunyan are De Foe's only peers in the common heart. He has been justly called the Murillo of the novelists. Boccaccio's warm and musical style is not more national than De Foe's stern outline and colloquial plainness. His poetry was that of the Bible, which Hazlitt well describes as that of solitude. All of grandeur that he develops is that of simplicity and self-reliance; and paradoxical as it seems, the great charm of his fiction is its truth. His convictions were grave, his observation minute, and his experience of life singularly painful, but conscience and intelligence were profoundly active; and to these causes we can easily trace both the individuality and the attraction of his genius.



Robinson Crusoe is a thoroughly English romance. It has none of the Southern glow of the Italian *novelle*. Sentiment is in abeyance to sense in its hero. The interest is derived chiefly from external adventure, and not from impassioned scenes; and the amusing and melodramatic elements, so conspicuous in French stories, are entirely ignored. It has the severity, the strong individuality, of the Anglo-Saxon mind. The chapter descriptive of domestic life in the household of a pious citizen of the middle class, is a most characteristic introduction; the passion for sea-life is a national trait; the religious feeling that struggles in the wanderer's breast, at the outset, with his own perverse desires, is also, both in its form and expression, singularly true to the character of the English Dissenters. The inventive talent which Robinson exhibits is a source of peculiar interest to a thrifty and commercial race; his self-dependent, methodical, and industrious spirit was but a type of his nation; his recognition of conscience and providence, the absence of imagination, and the multiplicity of facts, are phases of the story in strict accordance with the English mind. The very problem of the book — that of a human being thrown entirely upon his own resources — is one remarkably adapted to the genius of an Englishman, and it is worked out with equal significance. Solitude has been made the basis of novels and memoirs in many notable instances; but how diverse the treatment from that of De Foe! The biography of Trenck, the "Prisons" of Pellico, and the "Picciola" of De Saintine, borrow their moral interest from the isolation of their heroes; but it is affection and fancy that lend a charm to such narratives. Poets, the most eloquent of modern times, have sung the praises of solitude; Byron, Foscolo, and Chateaubriand have set it forth as the sphere of imaginative pleasure; Zimmerman has argued its claims; St. Pierre and Humboldt have indicated how much it enhances the enjoyment of nature. But in these and similar instances, the idiosyncrasy of the writers, and not human nature in general, is alive to the experiment. De Foe gives a practical solution to the idea. He describes the physical resources available to a patient and active hermit. He brings man into direct contact with Nature,

and shows how he, by his single arm, thought, and will, can subdue her to his use. He places a human soul alone with God and the universe, and records its solitary struggles, its remorse, its yearning for companionship, its thirst for truth, and its resignation to its Creator. Robinson is no poet, mystic, or man of science, but an Englishman of average mind and ordinary education; and on his desert island he never loses his nationality. Fertile in expedients, prone to domesticity, fond of a long ramble, mindful of the Sabbath, provident, sustained by his Bible and his gun, a philosopher by nature, a utilitarian by instinct, accustomed to introspection, serious in his views,—against the vast blank of solitude, his figure clad in goat-skins stands in bold relief,—the moral ideal and exemplar of his nation and class.

Writings that thus survive a miscellaneous group will be found to contain a vital element of the author's nature or experience. They triumph over the oblivious influence of change and time, because created "in the hasty stealth of nature"; and are more vigorous by virtue of this spontaneous origin. De Foe's life was a moral solitude. If he knew not the discipline of an uninhabited island, he was familiar with that deeper isolation which the tyranny of opinion creates. He was separated from his kind, not indeed by leagues of ocean, but by the equally inexorable sea of faction. Prejudice, in an uncharitable age, divided him as effectually from society as a barrier of nature. Nor in his case did the sympathy of those for whom he thought and suffered relieve the grim features of solitude. He was too independent, and too much in advance of his time, not to be essentially apart from those who were ostensibly near and around him. He was driven into the intrenchments of consciousness. Like all bold and individual thinkers, he was often alone. From his earliest years his lot was cast and his choice made with a despised minority, and not until his head was bleached did the party and the class with which he acted hold the balance of power. As Bunyan was the spiritual prophet of the people, De Foe was their practical expositor. He espoused their cause, before philanthropic organizations and public opinion had won respect for it. Oberlin had then regenerated no poor village;

Penny Magazines were undreamed of; Burns had not set to undying music the cottager's life; the vulgar were divided by an immense gulf from the educated. Heroic then was it to brood over the dark problems of civilization. Literature was the privilege and the ornament of the few. Pope translated the *Iliad*, and celebrated the graces of Belinda; Swift did a courtier's taskwork; Addison, with scholarly zest, described his Italian journey; but De Foe pleaded for the rights of Dissenters, expounded the principles of trade, and wrote manuals for the religious, political, and domestic guidance of the masses. He was an intellectual pioneer, the herald of utility in letters, the advocate of practical truth. Instead of social distinction and the pleasures of taste, he aimed at reform. Ignored by the elegant, despised by the gay, persecuted by those in authority, he sternly rebuked corruption, boldly announced principles, and incessantly advocated humanity.

The brutal injustice of party spirit in England is signally illustrated in the life of her most characteristic author. The ferocity of her baronial era seems transferred to her literary and political annals. The same inhuman and relentless cruelty, insensate prejudice, and dogmatic will reign in the world of opinion, as in the scenes of the ring, the duel, the criminal law, the domestic tyranny, and other barbarisms that deform her social history. Genius enjoys no immunity from this instinctive exercise of arbitrary power. The robbers of Italy spared Ariosto, when they discovered that their captive was the author of the *Orlando*; the French mob that besieged the Tuileries and decapitated the king, protected from mutilation the beautiful statues that adorned the palace garden; but no sentiment checks the rabid pen or melts the bigoted judge that sought, in De Foe's age and country, to awe or vanquish obnoxious writers. The terms in which they are assailed are those of execration or contempt; all sense of justice, honor, truth, and humanity is repudiated; and the victim is coolly neglected, or heartlessly crushed without an emotion of pity or a scruple of remorse. Even the comparatively liberal criticism of a later day is tinctured with this savage arrogance. The impertinent sarcasm with which the

fashionable reviews treated Keats and Wordsworth, the faint praise with which Reynolds kept the merits of Gainsborough in the shade, the fanatical calumnies heaped upon Shelley, the coarse ridicule that drove Byron into satire, and the imprisonment of Hunt and Montgomery, attest an identical tyranny of opinion. Happily De Foe vindicated and endeared his own memory by the legacy he bequeathed in his unrivalled fiction. But it serves not only to make him remembered with gratitude; it is a nucleus for the indignation and sympathy of subsequent generations. Think of that inventive mind, that heart overflowing with manly emotion, that reason ever exercised for the honor of his country and the advancement of his race, tortured, darkened, and baffled, throughout a long and heroic life, by the falsehood, the scorn, and the cruelty of mankind. Swift denied him learning; Oldmixon declared that his vocation was espionage; Prior pronounced his pen venal; Pope put him into the *Dunciad*; the courts of London doomed him to the pillory and a felon's cell; one writer charged him with prefixing a De to his name to escape the reputation of an English origin; another insinuated that he appropriated Selkirk's papers, and stole the materials of his famous story; one day he is advertised as an absconding debtor, the next published as the author of a vile tract that he never saw; now the stupidity of his own party misinterprets the satirical intent of a pamphlet, which is essentially promoting their cause; and now the Bill of Rights is openly violated by the ministers of justice, in order to wreak upon him their vindictive fiat. And all this time De Foe was the most thorough Englishman and writer of his day, a model of integrity, and as consistent, sincere, and brave as he was gifted.